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No. I.

FRAGMENTS OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

No. I.

The study of Ecclesiastical history is one of great importance. Yet it is very generally neglected. In whatever form religion prevails it has so mighty an influence; it is a moral cause of such uncontrollable efficacy, as might, one would think, attract the attention of every serious thinker. This is peculiarly the case in relation to christianity, which instead of exhibiting the suppleness and pliancy of most other forms of religion, rigorously demands the assent of every one, and excludes every other doctrine. Indeed it can do no less, without renouncing its character and claims, and descending from the high ground of truth and certainty, to the level of expediency and worldly policy. The very genius of christianity then invests it with an importance and a power, which characterize no other religion; and render it an object worthy of the attention of the philosopher and the politician, as well as of the man. In this country, the study is very greatly disregarded. Even christians, not to say many ministers, know very little either of the past events, or present condition of the church. It has occurred to us, that if we can by any means rouse the attention of our countrymen to this subject, we shall perform an acceptable service. With this object in view, we shall occasionally present to our readers fragments of history, calculated to excite curiosity, and afford useful information. In carrying this plan into execution, we shall not confine ourselves to chronological order; but pass from century to century, backward and forward, as in the course of reading or meditation, we meet with characters or events peculiarly interesting or instructive.

In the present number we will give some anecdotes respecting the persecution of christians under the emperor Julian, usually surnamed the Apostate.

He was nephew of Constantine, miscalled the great; was born A. D. 332; and in the twenty-eighth year of his age succeeded his cousin Constantius, on the throne of the Cæsars. As the family of Julian were christians, he was placed under teachers, who professed that faith; but was seduced by the arts of pagan sophists, who corrupted his principles, and allured him to heathenism. Having apostatized from the faith, he conceived the most deadly hatred against the name and cause of Jesus Christ; and seems to have panted after the imperial purple, that he might restore the delapidated temples, and set up the overthrown altars. He was a man of sprightly mind; was passionately devoted to literature; affected great love of philosophy; but, after all, seemed to believe in the power of magic! Pretended philosophers are often pitifully superstitious.

Julian, after having ascended the throne, applied himself, with all the rancorous and malignant zeal of an apostate, to overthrow christianity, and re-establish paganism. For this purpose he endeavored to raise the reputation of heathenism, and bring the religion of the cross into contempt. For accomplishing the first of these purposes, he exhorted the priests to imitate the purity, temperance, and charity of the christians; required them to deliver discourses on the duties of life to the people, and to engage in daily prayers with them. He erected houses of charity, where the poor should be fed; and especially commanded that travellers should be furnished with introductory or commendatory letters, in imitation of the *certificates*, as they are now termed, afforded to christians, when about to go into strange places. In the mean while by threats, and punishments, and outrageous tortures, as well as by ridicule, and buffoonery, by the temptations of wealth and power, and by all the arts of an accomplished sophist, he endeavored to terrify or allure christians into apostacy. It may be well to enter into some detail here, more clearly to unfold his devices.

He then encouraged and kept up controversies among christians.

He stripped them of all offices civil and military.

He ordered the clergy to be enrolled as common soldiers in the army.

He plundered churches for the purpose of erecting heathen temples.

He encouraged his presidents and procurators to exact enormous contributions from the christians: and when these peaceable and unoffending subjects complained of these spoliations to their sovereign, he dismissed them with mockery and insult.

And, as a measure on which he greatly relied for success, he forbade christians to teach in the schools unless they would renounce their religion, and return to idolatry; and he prohibited the children of christians from being taught in any but pagan institutions.

We have before us, now, the edict which he published on this occasion; and the testimony of a heathen, and a christian writer. Ammianus Marcellinus remarks, in reference to it, "*Inter quæ erat illud inclemens, quod docere vetuit magistros rhetoricos et grammaticos christianos, ni transissent ad Numinum cultum, xxv, 4.* Augustine *De Civit Dei* xviii, 52. *An ipse non est ecclesiam persecutus, qui christianos liberales literas docere ac discere vetuit.*" From the quotation of Ammianus we see that even a heathen regarded the measure as severe. It was certainly no credit to the cause which the emperor had so zealously espoused. His common saying in reference to this subject was "We are pierced with our own weapons." He meant that the liberal education afforded to christians, enabled them to triumph in argument over their adversaries. It was the settled policy of the man to ruin christianity by making it an object of contempt and derision. While eloquent and learned men were its advocates, however, he knew that this would be impossible. He determined therefore that christian teachers and scholars should not occupy places in the seats of learning. And this, for the worthy purpose of overthrowing the religion of Jesus Christ, and introducing the worship of Jupiter and Juno, of Mars and Venus, and the whole rabble of heathen deities.

The christians well understood the emperor's design, and sorely complained of the grievance. It would be easy to fill page after page with their remonstrances and complaints. But all were fruitless and vain. He treated them with the most mortifying contempt, and the bitterest scorn. And with consummate hypocrisy, while he only amused himself with jesting on their grievances, pretending that he was too mild and humane to put men to death for their religion; he allowed his subalterns to plunder, torture, and destroy at their pleasure.

This career of cruelty and tyranny however was short. Very soon after his accession to the throne, he undertook a war against Sapor, king of Persia. All the historians tell us, that he vowed, if the Gods would grant him the victory, totally to extirpate christianity. He, however, was slain in battle by an unknown Persian soldier, before he had reigned quite two years. Finding himself mortally wounded, he is reported to have caught a handful of his own streaming blood,

and throwing it upward, to have exclaimed “Vicisti O Galilæe?”—You have conquered O Galilean—By which appellation, he always designated the Saviour of the world.

This fragment of history is introduced for the purpose of the following remarks.

1. In primitive times, christians paid much attention to learning and philosophy. The immediate disciples of Jesus Christ were fully instructed by him, and qualified for their ministry. The apostle Paul, whose writings form so large a part of the canon of the New Testament, charged Timothy, and all christian ministers through him, to give themselves to reading and meditation. After the apostolic age, we find many christian grammarians, rhetoricians, and philosophers. And in every succeeding period, as long as the Bible was known and read, the best literature was found in the church. Since the reformation, a new impulse has been given to the mind of man; and christians have adorned and extended every department of learning and science. We are warranted, then, in the conclusion that the religion of the Bible is favorable to intellectual as well as moral improvement.

2. He, who was confessedly the most dangerous enemy that christianity ever had, and whose arts did more mischief to the cause, than the ten persecutions, depended chiefly for complete success in his unholy devices, on banishing, according to the terms of his edict, christian teachers and scholars from the schools. Make the teachers of religion contemptible, and religion will, in public estimation, partake of their character. No man will regard an instructor whom he despises. It is true that learning is not every thing. Far from it. True piety, and purity of moral character are the first requisites—But a rich, well disciplined mind ought to be regarded as next in point of importance. Christians, then, as christians ought to favor institutions of learning; and be most forward and zealous in their support. Would it not be strange if any, in our highly favored land, should be found acting the part, and coinciding with the views of Julian the apostate?

SHORT DISCOURSES FOR FAMILIES.

ACTS, XXVI, 28.

“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”

Ministers of the Gospel, have seldom been permitted to address so splendid an auditory, as that, to which the Apostle Paul is here introduced. King Agrippa, invested by the

Roman Emperors, with authority over several districts; Bernice his Sister; Portius Festus, a Roman governor; together with the chief captains and principal men of the city of Cæsarea, composed the audience, and had entered into the place of hearing with great ostentation. At the command of Festus, Paul was introduced to this select assembly, in circumstances, not the best calculated to procure their candid attention. As a prisoner, bound in chains, and charged with high crimes and misdemeanors, he is about to be heard in his own defence, that an authentic statement of his case may be transmitted to the emperor.

Can any person consider the character of the persons, who have undertaken to form a decision on the apostle's case; or the very unfavourable circumstances in which he is compelled to make his defence, without a painful expectation, that he will be found unable to procure from these persons a fair and candid report of the case? We are all prepared to expect great things from the Apostle of the Gentiles, but can it be expected that he will view unawed, the pomp and splendor of his haughty judges? Will his feelings be untouched by the contrast between governors and kings invested with all the trappings of royalty, and himself accused and confined as a criminal? Can we hope that a consciousness of his integrity, together with that decision of character, and that manly firmness which he had so often manifested, will on this occasion be equally exhibited, and with similar success? It is on great occasions that we may expect a display of great mental resources. The ordinary and every-day occurrences of life, give little room for the exhibition of superior energies. Knowing the embarrassing circumstances in which Paul was placed on this occasion, we must certainly entertain a high opinion of the man, who could rise above all those considerations, which must have overwhelmed any mind of ordinary powers, and deliver a speech peculiarly pertinent, convincing and appropriate. Agrippa, who was the most distinguished person present, and probably better qualified than any of the rest, to form an opinion on the matters submitted to his consideration by the prisoner, confesses in the text that, he is, "Almost persuaded to be a Christian."

Two enquiries are suggested by the text.

1. By what inducements was Agrippa almost persuaded to be a christian?

2. Why was he not entirely persuaded?

If, among the vast numbers who are favoured with gospel privileges, there be any, who, like Agrippa, are only almost persuaded to be christians; we would gladly discuss this

subject in a way calculated to remove their hesitancy and produce an unwavering decision in favour of christianity. To view a sinner "not far from the kingdom of Heaven," and yet unwilling to enter into that kingdom, to see him balanced between religion and impiety; between the motives by which men are urged to be christians, and the motives which impel them on in criminal causes, must give pain to every benevolent mind. Who would not wish, in such a case to throw something into the balance that might produce a preponderance in favour of christianity?

As Agrippa is not present, we cannot ascertain, by a personal examination, what part of the Apostle's discourse was most influential in removing his opposition to christianity; or why he was almost persuaded to be a christian. The Apostle's speech however is before us; and by a reference to it, we shall discover several particulars which very probably had at least a temporary effect on the mind of Agrippa. There are three things which merit attention.

1. Paul's appeal to the predictions of the Prophets.
2. The sufferings of Jesus Christ—and
3. His own conversion.

Paul's first appeal in behalf of himself and of christianity, was made to the prophets. He contended for nothing more in his preaching, than the prophets had foretold, viz. that Christ should suffer and that he should be the first, that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people and to the gentiles.

Agrippa, it appears, was prepared to feel the force of the argument, drawn from the prophecies, in favour of the christian religion; having been acquainted with the writings of the prophets, and what is of much greater importance, persuaded of the truth of their predictions. To feel the force of the argument drawn from this source in favour of christianity, it is only necessary to observe, that a long train of events, such as had never been witnessed by man, were circumstantially foretold many centuries before they took place; and that in some of the predictions were distinctly marked the birth, the life, the character, the death and resurrection of one whom the Jews expected as the Messiah: and that every particular respecting this most extraordinary and wonderful person was literally accomplished in Jesus Christ. So full and circumstantial is the account given by some of the prophets, of events which have since been recorded by the Evangelists, as historical facts; that the predictions have almost as great an appearance of history as *their* historical narratives. One circumstance must be noticed, that those predictions may have their

full influence; which is, that the writings containing them, have been deposited with a people, who of all men are the most opposed to christianity and its divine author, and consequently there is no room to suspect that any alteration has ever been introduced into the prophetic writings, to render them more conformable to the gospel history.

Let any person peruse attentively the fifty third chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah; and compare the contents of that chapter, with the history of Jesus Christ, written by the Evangelists; and then ask whether the same person and the same events are not described by both. How happened it then that Isaiah, about seven centuries before the christian æra, was enabled to give an anticipated circumstantial history of Christ? Shall the wild supposition be adopted, that the coincidence between the predictions and the events, is the effect of chance? When a historian publishes an account of facts which are known to have taken place at the time, in the manner, and by the means stated in his history; what would be thought of the person who would nevertheless assert, that the historian had *no knowledge* of the facts he had recorded, and that it was to be ascribed entirely to accident that such statements were made in the historical narration; or that there was any coincidence between the record and the events? All would agree that reason is not the proper instrument to be employed in the management of a man of this sort.

The prophet then could not have given an anticipated history of the life of Christ, without possessing a knowledge of the facts predicted. How was that knowledge acquired? It must have been communicated by Him, to whom all things future, as well as the present and the past are equally and perfectly known. The prophets spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. They foretold the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. The Messiah was the burden of their theme, the person to whom their predictions were intended to guide mankind, and in whom they all centre. The accomplishment of these predictions goes to prove, not only the inspiration of the prophets; but the heavenly origin of that method of salvation which has been introduced conformably to their predictions. Christianity is thus shewn to be of heavenly origin: and if so, every man ought to be a christian.

2. The sufferings of Christ, it is thought, might have had a persuasive influence on the mind of Agrippa. Paul united his voice with the voice of the prophets; they had said that Christ should suffer; he asserted that those sufferings had been sustained, that "Christ had died and risen again according to the Scriptures."

But why did he suffer? Agrippa, knew doubtless, the answer given by a prophet to this question. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." Now, while it is conceded, that to be *convinced*, and to be *persuaded*, are very different things; and while we acknowledge that many may be found "holding the truth in unrighteousness," we must entertain the opinion that Agrippa found some difficulty in resisting the persuasive influence of the cross of Christ. Has "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten son to die, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life?" And can it be thought that this unparalleled love may be contemplated by a sinner, without any persuasive influence. Can he stand by the cross, and attentively view the innocent sufferer there suspended, without enquiring, why does he thus suffer? What mean these groans, those strong cries and tears and that bloody sweat? The answer presents itself. These things display the justice and mercy of God; the boundless compassion of the Saviour, and the inconceivably wretched condition of man. They all in strains of eloquence, which one might expect to prove irresistible, persuade sinners to be reconciled to God. The constraining influence of the love of Christ, exhibited on the cross, the apostle himself most sensibly felt; and on this he seems to have relied chiefly, as the most efficacious means of demolishing the strong holds of Satan, and of persuading sinners to become christians. Hence he "determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified;" and to persevere in the inculcation of the doctrines of the cross, which, though they were "a stumbling block to the Jews; and to the Greeks foolishness; were to believers the power of God and the wisdom of God." If I be lifted up, said Jesus, I will draw all men unto me. And, by what inducement, may we not ask, shall a sinner be prevailed on to become a christian, to whom a crucified Saviour is preached in vain. If, under the awful exhibition of divine wrath made on the cross, the heart remain insensible; if it be in vain assailed by the tender mercy of God, and by the compassion of a dying Saviour, can it be expected that any means of superior energy can possibly be employed?

3. The third particular selected from the speech of the apostle, is, his narrative respecting his own conversion.

It is thought that this narrative must have had an effect on the mind of Agrippa, not only as it furnished an additional evidence of the truth of christianity, but more especially as it made him acquainted with an illustrious display of divine

grace, in the transformation of a furious persecutor into a meek and humble disciple of Christ.

To hear from the most obscure and illiterate believer, a narrative of the means which have been employed for his conversion, and of the reasons which have determined him to be a christian; will generally have some effect on the most careless; they must acknowledge that by sufficient reasons he has been determined to avail himself of the provisions of the gospel of Christ. But the narrative given by St. Paul was singularly calculated to make a favourable impression, as it evinced, that previous to his conversion, he had been in the most unfavourable state of mind that can be easily imagined to judge favourably of christianity. His education, his prejudices, his confirmed habits, and his worldly prospects and attachments, were all calculated to render him permanently hostile to the christian religion; in so much that if the truth of the narrative which he has given of his conversion should be called in question, it would be impossible to assign any adequate cause of that change. No man, and especially no such man as Paul, would voluntarily sacrifice all of his worldly prospects, and expose himself to poverty, disgrace, persecution and death, merely for the purpose of deceiving his fellow men. We must therefore ascribe the change which was effected in his sentiments, his heart, and life, to the cause which he himself has assigned. But if the narrative of the Apostle was necessarily to be admitted as correct, Agrippa must, at once, have been convinced of the truth of the christian religion, and of the danger of remaining destitute of an interest in its provisions. But it must be remarked further, that Agrippa had heard the account given by Paul, of his former character and temper; of the madness and fury which he had manifested in the persecution of christians even in distant cities; insomuch that his very name excited terror in the minds of the disciples, in every place. This furious persecutor now appears before him, meek, patient, and humble. No injury or insult disturbs the calm tranquility of his bosom, nor can persecution and chains alter his purpose or abate his holy zeal in the cause of Jesus Christ. Every thing now discovered in the man; all that he says, and every disposition and feeling which he manifests, tend to exemplify the benign and holy efficacy of that gospel which he inculcated in his public discourses. What must Agrippa have thought, when to the rude interruption which Paul, while speaking, received from Festus, "Paul thou art beside thyself," he answered, with all possible meekness, and at the same time with manly dignity and firmness, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak

the words of truth and soberness." Would he not ask, whence has this man obtained this entire command of his once ungovernable passions? Has the christian religion thus transformed "the lion to a lamb?" If so, how happy should I be, could I be brought under the influence of its transforming energy? I am almost persuaded to be a christian. Agrippa probably felt an impulse from the narrative given by the apostle, such as would be felt by any candid man, on hearing from an intelligent christian, in detail, the reasons which prevailed with him to embrace the religion of Christ. In a case of this sort we are brought to make a common cause with the narrator; to look upon christianity as an interest common to us both, and as he states the reasons of his hope and the weighty considerations by which he was induced to be a christian, we are not only persuaded that he has acted with propriety, but we must act in direct opposition to our own conviction of duty and interest, if we fail to imitate him.

But the most difficult part of our task is yet before us.

2. Why was not Agrippa entirely persuaded to be a christian.

Every thing, that we would have supposed calculated to persuade the man, and to bring him to form an unhesitating decision on the subject before him, would seem to have been thrown into one scale. We can discover nothing that ought to have produced a moment's hesitation. He believed the Prophets—he had sufficient evidence of the truth of their most important predictions, when *their* accomplishment, in the birth, the life, the death, and the resurrection of the promised Messiah, was submitted to his consideration. And in addition to all this, he had ocular proof of the efficacy of the gospel of the Grace of God, in the salutary change which had been effected by this grace, in the heart and character of the individual by whom he was addressed. Had he in these circumstances, determined to unite himself to the church of Christ,—to trust his promises—to obey his precepts, and to imitate his example, we could have discovered nothing in the transaction to excite surprise. The motives presented, would have been considered amply sufficient to account for such a determination. But what shall we say when the reverse has happened. Had the searcher of hearts made known to us what the views and feelings of Agrippa were in that interesting moment when he uttered the words of our text; or had Agrippa candidly stated what it was that prevented him from obeying the dictates of his judgment and conscience, we are tempted to think that the information might have been of some account, not only as it would more fully develope the character of an individual,

but more especially as it might have been applied with equal propriety to vast numbers, who walking in the footsteps of Agrippa, resist the truth, oppose the dictates of reason, revelation and conscience, and are only "almost persuaded to be christians."

The descriptions given in the word of God, of man in a state of nature, will apply to every man who is in that state; and if correctly understood, will enable us to account for the conduct of such men in cases which, without the information which the Bible gives, must have been deemed utterly inexplicable. To this source of information we must have recourse, in the case before us. And unless it can be shewn that Agrippa in a state of unregeneracy, was not actuated as all other persons in that state are and have been actuated, his case must be referred to the same standard that fixes their character and doom. Do the Scriptures give us any information on a subject, involved in impenetrable darkness to all men destitute of a revelation? Can we learn from the Bible, why men knowing good choose evil? Why, though convinced, they are not converted? It is readily seen that a man in the condition supposed, must be under the influence of a strong bias to evil; his opposition to the calls of reason and revelation must be ascribed to the operation of a cause powerful and permanent. The Scriptures ascribe the unbelief of a sinner, or, which is the same thing, his unwillingness to be a christian, to the joint operation of two causes—*An evil heart; and the God of this world.*

A heart of unbelief inclining the sinner to depart from the living God, is "*an evil heart.*" And "the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God, should shine unto them." But as the unbeliever *only* is held under the empire of Satan; as resistance would not fail to put the fiend to flight; the rejection of the salvation of Christ must be considered as the sinner's own voluntary act; an act resulting from the evil bias of his own corrupt heart. We can have no hesitation in ascribing Agrippa's rejection of the gospel; to the influence of this cause. Many considerations would have weight with him, and probably influence his determination respecting christianity, which would not have been regarded by an honest heart. Methinks I hear him say, "Am I about to be a christian? What will the emperor think of such a measure? Can I bear the thought of hazarding his displeasure; of losing my office—my income and my popularity? Am I ready to abandon my associates, and to exchange their applause for contempt and execration? Can I descend

from the high station I now occupy, to the deep vale of poverty and reproach, to which Paul has been reduced, with that resignation which he exhibits? Ah! that this were possible. I see that the christian religion is the product of infinite wisdom and benevolence; that the prophets spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; that their predictions have been literally fulfilled; that Jesus Christ is the Messiah whose advent they foretold; and that there is no prospect of an escape from impending ruin, but through the virtue of his death. I am almost persuaded; and I condemn myself because I am not fully persuaded, to be a christian." Unhappy man! If he continued to regard the praise of man, more than the praise of God; if he chose rather to lay up treasures on earth than in heaven; if, convinced that Jesus was the son of God, and the promised Messiah, he continued unwilling to confess him; what may he be supposed to think of these things now? You will all readily agree that Agrippa *ought* to have been a christian: and are you under less or weaker obligations to embrace the offer of salvation through Christ than he was? Have you never been almost persuaded to be christians? Has not a secret influence frequently accompanied the word of reconciliation to your hearts, rendering it almost irresistible? How then have you been able to justify to yourselves the resistance which you have offered to the dispensations of mercy; or the *expedients* to which you have had recourse to pacify a guilty conscience?

Have you any reason to expect, that any means of superior efficacy to those which have heretofore been employed, will at any future period be used for your conversion? If such means were to be expected by any sinner, how could *you* reasonably calculate on deriving any advantage from them? By closing your eyes against the light already afforded, have you become entitled to additional lights? Because you have hardened your hearts under the dispensation of gospel grace, may you therefore flatter yourselves that irresistible grace will be bestowed, that you may be persuaded to be christians. You would have some encouragement in entertaining such hopes, if it appeared that another gospel, and other means had been employed to persuade Agrippa, after he was left unpersuaded by Paul. If the gospel is your only hope, beware of abusing it.

TIMOTHEUS.

Evidences of Christianity.—No. VI.

If the testimony ascribed to the apostles of Jesus Christ in the gospel history be a *reality*, his religion must be true. This, if we mistake not, has been clearly evinced in our last number. Have we then any just reason to call in question this interesting fact? A proper attention to the testimony itself, as it is exhibited in the books of the New Testament, will furnish the proper reply to this inquiry.

Would it be possible for a false witness to assume the air, and manner, and tone of truth, and to support that assumption through a whole narrative of considerable length? We think not. Sincerity must ever have an expression and manner peculiar to itself. This is a truth that will hardly be called in question. And if it ever has been exemplified, it seems to be in the records now before us. Nothing more simple, nothing more artless, nothing that appears to be further removed from all the various artifices of imposture, has ever fallen under our observation.

That the authors of the gospel history wished their narrative to be believed, we are not permitted to doubt. But little or nothing of this appears in the narrative itself. Their uniform aim seems to have been to declare the truth, the undisguised and unvarnished truth, whatever its reception might be. Seldom or never do they appear to have reflected, “will this be *believed* or will it be thought *incredible*?” And is this the manner of impostors!

Very strong, undoubtedly, must have been the attachment of these affectionate disciples to their Lord and master. And yet, in the whole course of their narrative, we never meet with any studied *encomiums* upon his character, or a single expression of resentment against his most cruel and unrelenting enemies. And, what is singularly remarkable, while to his and their own enemies they are so very forbearing, their own faults and miscarriages, and the misconduct of their friends and associates, are recorded without scruple. This surely is not the manner of impostors.

The particularity with which these writers have designated the time, the place, the persons, and other circumstances, implicated in their narrations, must have afforded their enemies an easy opportunity of detection, had any thing material in their history been incorrect. And would impostors have committed themselves in this way?

Their harmony and agreement with one another, is certainly a striking evidence in their favor. Among the evangelical historians there do, indeed, appear to be some unessential

diversities—an unequivocal evidence, it appears to us, that they did not write by concert—But in every thing essential, the minutest circumstances not excepted, they are perfectly agreed. And is it reasonable to suppose that impostors, not writing by concert, would thus harmonize with one another?

If the New Testament be nothing more than a wicked fabrication, its authors must have been some of the most abandoned of men. And is it possible that the greatest enemies of righteousness should give us the best account of the various duties which we owe to God our maker, and to one another?—That a set of miserable impostors should form one *just idea* of that sublime theology, that exalted piety, and that pure morality, which dignify and adorn every page of the New Testament, is utterly *incredible*.

Read with the profoundest attention the several books which compose this volume, against which so many objections have been raised, and see whether a single mark of imposture is to be met with in any one of them. Or, should this be thought too much trouble, only read the epistles, the most affectionate epistles which are ascribed to the apostle Paul—thoughts that breathe, and words that burn—and ingenuously tell us, was not their author in earnest? If he was, these epistles cannot be spurious.

But we have positive evidence to establish the point under consideration.

When a volume now makes its appearance, and is permitted to pass from one edition to another without contradiction, under the name of any man as its *author*, we do not, generally, require any additional evidence of the fact. Now we have satisfactory evidence that two, at least, of the gospels and several of the epistles, were published under the names which they now bear, in the apostolic age, and that they have been quoted and referred to as *genuine* productions in all succeeding ages. And this is more evidence than can, generally, be produced to support the genuineness of other books. Had these productions been spurious, the imposition would, no doubt, have been quickly detected by some sharp sighted and inveterate adversary. But their authenticity does not appear ever to have been called in question by any ancient Jew, or Pagan, or Christian, whether orthodox or heretic. So far is this from being the case, that Celsus, a virulent enemy of the christian faith, who wrote an elaborate treatise against these books, acknowledges them to be genuine. And this, we may be sure, he would not have done, without satisfactory evidences of the fact.

But we have still stronger evidence of the authenticity of these books. In the second Epistle of Peter, we meet with an express reference to the Epistles of Paul. It must by no means be imagined, that this testimony loses any thing of its authority, by being found in the same volume with the epistles to which the reference is made. Peter had no doubt, the very best means of information on this subject, and his character for veracity ought not to be considered inferior to any Pagan philosopher or Apostolic Father.

“Take the Epistle of the blessed Paul, the Apostle into your hands,” says Clement Romanus, in his epistle to the Corinthians, an epistle written in the name of the Church of Rome—“What was it he wrote unto you at his first preaching of the Gospel among you? Verily he did by the Spirit admonish you concerning himself, and Cephas; and Apollos, because that even then ye had began to fall into parties and factions among yourselves.”* Here we have an evident reference to Paul’s first Epistle to the Corinthians. How would a Bishop of Rome, and an Apostolic father, of good repute, have written in this manner, in the name of the church of Rome, to the Church of Corinth, if no such epistle had been in existence?

“Above all, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, which he spake concerning equity and long suffering, saying be ye merciful, and ye shall obtain mercy: forgive and ye shall be forgiven: as ye do, so shall it be done unto you: as ye give, so shall it be given unto you: as ye judge, so shall ye be judged: as ye are kind to others, so shall God be kind to you: with what measure ye meet, with the same shall it be measured unto you again.”† We need hardly to inform any attentive readers of the New Testament, that these quotations are taken from the gospels of Matthew and Luke. There are, in this excellent epistle, a great many other evident allusions or references to some of the Evangelists, to the Acts of the Apostles, or to some of our canonical epistles. Similar attestations might easily be adduced from several other apostolic fathers; such as Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias, &c. would our limits admit of such details. Now can it reasonably be supposed, that men who lived in the Apostolic age, men who had all seen and conversed with some of the Apostles, would suffer themselves to be deceived in a matter so deeply interesting to every disciple of Christ?

* Archbishop of Canterbury’s Translation. p. 173.

† Ibid. p. 153. 4.

The evidence which is here advanced, to prove that the books of our gospel history are both genuine and authentic, might be greatly corroborated by testimonies from writers of the following age. A single instance must suffice.

“ We have not received, says Irenæus, the knowledge of the way of salvation by any others than those by whom the gospel has been brought to us. Which gospel they first preached, and afterwards by the will of God, committed to writing, that it might be for time to come the foundation and pillar of our faith.—For after that our Lord arose from the dead, and they (the Apostles) were endowed from above with the power of the Holy Ghost coming down upon them, they received a perfect knowledge of all things. They then went forth to all the ends of the earth declaring to men the blessing of heavenly peace, having all of them, and every one alike the gospel of God. Matthew then among the Jews, wrote a gospel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel at Rome, and founding a church there. And after their exit, Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us in writing the things that had been preached by Peter. And Luke the companion of Paul, put down in a book the gospel preached by him. Afterwards John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon his breast, he likewise published a gospel while he dwelt at Ephesus in Asia.” Such is the testimony of the celebrated Irenæus, who in his youth had been a disciple of the venerable Polycarp. Now as Polycarp had been a disciple of the Evangelist John, he would no doubt communicate to Irenæus the information respecting the gospel history and its sacred books, which he had received from that Evangelist. There can therefore, be no just reason to suppose, that he could be in any essential error either with respect to the authenticity, or the authors, of the books in question.

Thus we may see, that besides the most striking internal evidence, we have very strong positive proof to show, that the Apostolic testimony is a *reality*, and not a mere fabrication.

To every candid inquirer after truth, the arguments already advanced in favor of the apostolic testimony, will, it is presumed, appear absolutely conclusive. Should any of our readers, however, be still dissatisfied, we must be permitted to entreat their most serious attention to the following considerations.

That there is now, and has long been in the world, such a religion as that of christianity, is a fact which will not be called in question. And as it is a fact of a very peculiar and extraordinary nature, such also must have been its origin.

Now the gospel history furnishes us with all the information upon this interesting subject, which we can reasonably desire. Yes, the gospel history furnishes us with a very circumstantial, and if true, a very satisfactory account of the origin and introduction of the christian religion into the world. But if we reject this account, where shall we find another that will bear the test of a candid and impartial examination? Not in all the annals of the world. And is this credible? Is it to be supposed that an event so extraordinary should take place, and that within the æra of authentic history, and yet, that no historian, whether Pagan, Jewish, or Christian, should think it worth his while to trace out, and commit to record, some just account of its origin and progress among the nations of the earth? This, surely, must be improbable in the extreme.

Now if such a record ever existed, it must, in all probability, exist still. In the estimation of every true disciple, such a history must be a pearl of great price; a richer treasure than the *wealth* of worlds. And can it be imagined, that any true disciple, we might rather ask, can it be imagined that the whole christian church would suffer such a treasure—would suffer the archives of our religion, and the charter of our everlasting hopes, to be lost, or materially corrupted? No: this invaluable record has not been lost; it is still to be found among the books of the New Testament. We have, at least, in that volume a history of the origin, and first propagation of our holy religion in the world; and which professes to be the very history which was originally written by the apostles of Jesus Christ; and which has been quoted, and referred to, as such in the apostolic age, and in all succeeding ages to our own times.

It might, certainly, be expected that unbelievers who reject this history would furnish us with a better. But this they cannot do. They have not a single historical record to oppose to that of the gospel. No: they have nothing to oppose to the best authenticated of all ancient histories, but *objections* and *conjectures*. We are, indeed, referred to priestcraft, and kingcraft, and enthusiasm, and love of the marvellous, and credulity, &c. &c. These are, it will readily be acknowledged, fine subjects for declamation. But we need only open our eyes upon the transactions of the present day, and observe the tardy progress of christianity among the Heathen—the ignorant and credulous Heathen, notwithstanding all the exertions of statesmen, and philosophers, and princes, and kings and emperors, and zealous missionaries, to be convinced that the existence, and triumphs of christianity, are not to be accounted for in this way. Is it possible for any one to

compare this picture with the rapid progress in the primitive ages, and that in direct opposition to priests and statesmen and kings and emperors; and yet not be induced to acknowledge, that no unassisted human agency will account for the origin of the christian religion, and the astonishing rapidity of its diffusion over the earth in the first century of the christian æra?

The religion of Mohammed will furnish us with an instructive example, in the case under consideration. This extraordinary man was rich, and eloquent, and powerful; and had a number of powerful auxiliaries. Nor was it, strictly speaking, a *new religion*, which he undertook to propagate. No: he acknowledged the divine mission of Moses and of Jesus Christ. And it was a selection of what he considered most popular out of the Old Testament and the New, with such additions as he considered best calculated to please and fascinate a carnal taste, that he endeavored to impose upon the world. But in vain. He soon found that neither his eloquence, nor his feigned visions and revelations, nor the assistance of his powerful auxiliaries, could succeed in this arduous undertaking. Yes, he soon found that he must either abandon, in despair, his projects of ambition and worldly aggrandizement, or have recourse to **ARMS**.

Suppose twelve, or if you please, twelve hundred Jews were to undertake to impose upon the world, as the *true Messiah*, some *malefactor* lately executed at London, Paris, Jerusalem, or Richmond, would it be possible for them to succeed in a measure of this nature? The question may seem too absurd to be proposed. It is, however, a question in point.

But to put the matter beyond all reasonable doubt, we must be permitted to observe, that the christian religion never has been introduced as a new religion, since the apostolic age; but uniformly as the very same religion, which Christ himself and his apostles had preached, and which, accompanied by its rites and sacred institutions, had been preached and published and known in every succeeding age, wherever a church was established. Nor were the books of the gospel history, ever imposed upon the people of any age or country, as books which had been lately discovered in some secluded recess. No; they were always appealed to, and read as books, which had been in possession, and known, and read in their churches, from age to age. Now it seems hardly necessary to observe, that it was utterly impossible for any people to be imposed on in this way. Would it have been in the power of any preacher to make his audience believe that they had read, or heard read, books which they had never

seen before; or that they had heard from their infancy, a gospel which they had never heard before!*

Thus, it evidently appears, that an imposition of this nature, at a later period than the apostolic age, must have been absolutely impossible. And it will not surely be imagined that it could have taken place at an earlier period, before the name of Christ was known. Now we have shown by evidences, which to us at least, appear altogether irresistible, that it was not possible for the apostles to have palmed a falsehood of such easy detection upon the world. And thus we are again led by a train of consequences, which will, we doubt not, abide the test of the strictest examination, to the conclusion, that christianity is not a miserable imposition upon the credulity of man; but a *glorious reality*.

* See Leslie's Short Method.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF SCRIPTURE.

No. VI.

We shall proceed in the present lecture to that remarkable event in the history of the divine dispensations, the call of Abraham.

But it may be well previously to notice some difficulties which have occurred to the readers of Scripture, and afford such explanation of them as we are able.

In the ninth chapter of Genesis, we learn that God blessed Noah; permitted him to make use of animal food; and delivered to him some very important moral precepts, especially the prohibition against the shedding of blood. After which a gracious assurance was afforded that the earth should no more be destroyed by a flood. The rainbow was adopted as the token of this covenant, so that when we see that beautiful appearance, rendered doubly pleasing by associating with it the gracious promise of God, we know that the horrible catastrophe of a universal deluge is no more to be feared. But it is said that the rainbow is caused by the refraction, and reflection of light through, and from a gently descending shower; and that it is incredible, that during the sixteen hundred years that preceded the deluge, there was no appearance of a rainbow. This is thought a very formidable objection, so that a celebrated natural philosopher is said to have been confirmed in infidelity by the force of it. We would, however, just remark that the sacred historians does by no means

affirm what the objection supposes. The rainbow might have appeared from the beginning, and at *that time* have been fixed on as a sign or token of God's covenant with the patriarch. And accordingly the Hebrew text may be rendered, v. 13. "*I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant,*" &c. Thus is this difficulty solved.

The tenth chapter of Genesis contains a genealogy of the sons of Noah, and an account of their settlements in various parts of the world. Learned men by tracing ancient history, and comparing it with the sacred record, have shown a striking coincidence between the names of the founders of different nations, and those which we find in scripture; so as to describe with great accuracy the various parts of the earth which were divided among the sons of Noah. It does not, however, comport with our present plan to dwell on this subject. We shall then pass over this chapter, and after making a remark or two on the next, proceed to the history of Abraham.

The subjects of the eleventh chapter, are the building of Babel; the confusion of languages, and the genealogy of Shem down to Abraham. The following is the account given by Moses. "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth." The reason for building this tower has been variously stated. The following is the explanation given by the learned president Goguet, author of the *Origin of Laws*. "None of the ancient versions give us a clear idea of the motives which induced the sons of Noah to build

the tower of Babel; yet nothing is more easy than to render this passage intelligible. We need only attend to the different interpretations that the word rendered *name* will bear. It signifies a mark, a signal, and a name. Interpreters by fixing on this last signification have rendered the passage obscure, but by taking it in the sense of a mark or signal it becomes intelligible. Moses makes the sons of Noah say "Let us build a tower whose top may reach unto heaven, [i. e. a very high tower] and let us make it a mark or signal, lest we be scattered," &c.—It was the wise design of Heaven to disperse the families of mankind throughout the earth. The children of men had other views, and adopted the measure under consideration, to prevent their dispersion—God therefore interposes, and defeats their purposes. The language which the divine being is represented as using, is adapted to the ideas and usages of man—The Lord came down to see the tower" &c.

The confusion of tongues here recorded, is an event on which few remarks will be necessary. For the more speedy peopling of the earth God had determined, as before stated, that the families of mankind should be scattered into different and distant lands. The purpose of the Almighty was opposed—The tower was built to prevent dispersion. God, who first gave language to man, by an exertion of his power, gave new languages to different families, and thus produced such confusion as prevented the execution of their projects. And this we think fully accounts for the great variety of languages to be found among the children of men, of which many have not the least resemblance one to another.

There can be no doubt but that, could we see all the circumstances, we should perceive many advantages resulting from this confusion of tongues. Perhaps it was chiefly intended to prevent the universal corruption, and destruction of the human family, which had before taken place; at least to aid in the preservation of true religion in the world.

The remaining part of this chapter, containing only a genealogy, we shall pass over, and proceed to the History of the father of the faithful. As the period at which we have now arrived is one of great distinction, and as many things worthy of our attention are presented in this part of holy writ, we shall in the first place give a general sketch of the life of Abraham, and then notice particularly several subjects worthy of consideration.

Abraham, son of Terah, was born at Ur, a city of Chaldea, about the year of the world 2008. At the period of his birth idolatry had become very prevalent, and it is believed that

the family of Abraham was infected with this ambominable superstition, Joshua xxiv. 2.—Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood, in old time even Terah the father of Abraham and the father of Nachor; and they served other Gods. The Almighty in his infinite wisdom, for the purpose of preserving the knowledge of himself in the world, saw proper to call Abraham (at first named Abram) from his father's house, and his kindred to go into a strange land. The whole family had however, previously left Chaldea, and had settled at Haran in Mesopotamia. There Terah died, and thence, at the bidding of Heaven, Abraham with his wife Sarai, and Lot his nephew with all their substance departed and went into the land of Canaan. It may be as well here, as any where else, to remark that Sarai was a near relation to Abraham, some say his neice, others his half sister. Abraham himself states that she was the daughter of his father, but not of his mother. Gen. xx. 12. The reason of the doubt on this subject is, that according to the idiom of the Jews, a direct descendant even at the sixth remove is called a son or daughter, of which many instances may be given in Jewish genealogies. Now Terah might have had two wives, and by one of these had Abraham, and by another the father of Sarai. It must be confessed, however, that this interpretation seems to us rather constrained. If we admit then that Sarai was Abraham's half sister, it is but justice to remark that the intermarriage of near relations is not forbidden by any *instinct of human nature*; but by positive law. But let it be distinctly understood that we steadfastly maintain, that there are the justest reasons for the prohibition; that it is founded on the condition of man, and suited to his relations. In a word, we are most fully and firmly persuaded that the law, as it exists in our own country, is most salutary in its operations, and ought by no means to be relaxed in its penalties; and that those who are intrusted with the education of children, ought to implant in their minds a deep abhorrence of all those connections, which the law prohibits. But while this opinion is entertained, and most strongly urged, it is believed that previously to the enactment of law, and the feelings of education, the criminality of the practice would not be perceived. But the law was not given at this time; and therefore, we are not to regard Abraham in the light in which we would regard a man forming such a connection at the present time. It also deserves consideration, that in the infancy of the world, and it may be remarked that the observation is applicable to practices near the time of the general deluge, the relations of life were so few, that those of near blood could hardly avoid intermarriage;

and it is very possible that some families might have adopted the practice of intermarrying for the sake of keeping up a distinction or separation between themselves and others.

Further, it seems to have been a custom among the Jews, to use the term sister as an appellation of fondness for a wife. Abraham and Isaac not only do this; but in the Canticles, a poem universally ascribed to Solomon, the bridegroom is called "my sister, my spouse?" In the Apochryphal book of Tobit, Tobias calls his wife sister. And the apostle Paul uses a mode of speech very similar, "Have we not power to lead about a sister—a wife, as well as other apostles?" Now all this may show that the term under consideration was a common compellation among the Hebrews.

During Abraham's abode in Canaan, the land was visited with famine. Abraham sojourned in Egypt, and there obtained subsistence. It was here that, through fear, he called his wife sister; and in consequence she was taken from him by the Egyptian king; but by the interposition of Providence was restored. In another case, that of the king of Gerar, the patriarch behaved in the same manner. We observe once for all, that this conduct of Abraham was wrong. He equivocated, and distrusted the divine promises. The scripture doth not commend this behavior. It is recorded, and the remark applies to all the instances of misconduct in pious men, to let us see that there are faults in the best; that men, when tempted, are prone to fall; and that all ought to walk with circumspection, and constant dependence upon the grace of God. Many seem to suppose that whatever is related of good men in scripture, is approved, and set before us as an example for imitation. The fact is otherwise: they are exhibited just as they were, that we may imitate them wherein they did well, and be warned by their failures. It may however be observed, that the offence of Abraham has been by some much overrated; as it has been entirely taken away by others. It is but fair to give the following view of the subject, which has been presented by a learned and acute man. It has been before observed that the word sister was used among the Jews as a private expression of fondness for a wife. It is probable that the term brother was used by the woman. Abraham suspected that he might be ill treated in Egypt on account of Sarah. He requested Sarah to use the term brother in ordinary discourse, when speaking to him, or of him to the Egyptian women (for according to eastern customs she conversed with no men.) They might have reported her beauty to their husbands and near relatives. This reached the ears of Pharaoh, who was thereby induced to give her apartments

in his Harem; though it does not appear that he ever saw her. Thus Sarah's calling Abraham brother might have been the cause of their separation. The original says that "The Lord struck the house of Pharaoh with a great stroke, because of the *word* of Sarai, the wife of Abraham." This word may have reference to the term by which Sarai addressed her husband; but more probably to the cries and complaints which she made to God in consequence of the injury done in separating her from her husband. For supposing that Sarai was the sister and not the wife of Abraham; he was then her natural guardian, and it was violence to take her from him. The conduct of Pharaoh here was such as to justify the suspicions of Abraham; and he only used what may be called management and prudence in an affair which exposed him to much danger. His fear did not overcome his faith, nor did his faith induce presumption. This is left to the judgment of the reader.

The season of famine having past, Abraham returned to his former place of abode, accompanied by Lot. They both appear to have been rich in flocks and herds; a separation was therefore expedient. In this case Abraham displayed great condescension to his nephew. See chap. XIII. 7—12. After this the Lord appeared to Abraham and renewed the promises before made.

Sometime afterwards, an invasion of Sodom, and the associated cities of the plain was made by Chedorlaomer and several other kings, which proved successful; and Lot was taken prisoner. This having been told to Abraham, he collected the servants of his household, obtained assistance from his friends, pursued the victorious army, fell suddenly upon them in the night, smote them, and having pursued the fugitives to a great distance, recovered all the spoil, and brought back the prisoners. Abraham on his return passed near to Salem, where Melchisedec was king. This man came out to meet him; and being priest of the most high God, he blessed Abraham, and presented bread and wine as a refreshment of the little army. Abraham also gave him tythes of the spoil. The mention of Melchisedec makes it proper that a few words should be said concerning him, especially as many idle conjectures have been made respecting his nature and priesthood. The account which we have in Hebrews vii, is as follows:—"For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all: first being, by interpretation, king of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem,

which is king of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but, made like the son of God, abideth a priest continually." The passage is difficult—the best explanation seems to be this. Melchisedec was a priest of the most high God, appointed by him, and acknowledged to be such by his worshippers. 2. He was a king as well as a priest, had power of enacting laws, which he did in righteousness; and so trained his subjects that he was called a king of righteousness; and the place where he reigned was called *Salem* (that is peace.) In both these respects he was superior to Aaron and his sons; for his priesthood was unconfined, theirs limited to a single people; and while he governed by laws of his own enactment, they were bound by a prescribed ritual. 3. He was without father, or mother, or genealogy; these words are used in reference to his priesthood. The priests under the law must, by father and mother, belong to the tribe of Levi, and be able to trace their genealogy with certainty. Melchisedec did not derive his fitness for the priesthood from his parents, but was appointed immediately by God, and was therefore superior to the sons of Levi. 4. He had neither beginning of days, nor end of life. Here again reference is had to the priestly office. The office of Levitical priest required laborious service, and of course considerable strength of body; the time of their service then was fixed by the law, to begin at the age of thirty, and end at that of fifty. This was not the case with Melchisedec. He was a priest all the days of his life, as long as he existed he was a priest; and thus aptly represented the perpetual priesthood of Christ.

In the sequel of this chapter we have an interesting account of the generosity of the patriarch. (ver. 21—24.)

Sometime after these events the Lord appeared to Abraham in a vision and encouraged him to depend on the divine protection. Abraham, who to this time had continued childless, ventures to utter his complaints; "Lord God what wilt thou give me," &c. See xv. 2. Upon this a son is promised, and a very numerous posterity assured to him. Abraham believed the promise made, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. This very important subject will be noticed hereafter. We are now considering only the history of Abraham. God again gave assurance of his being the God of Abraham, and that his descendants should inherit the land of Canaan; and to confirm him in this belief, a solemn covenantal transaction takes place; and, in vision, the descent of the children of Israel into Egypt, their oppression there, the deliverance from Pharaoh, and settlement in Canaan were

represented. In this covenant God engaged to give to Abraham the land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates.

Still however Abraham continued childless—Sarai had given up the hope of becoming a mother; and therefore wishing to have a child by adoption; she persuaded her husband to go in to her handmaid, “For it may be, said she, that I may obtain children by her.” The event was according to expectation; but Hagar became proud and despised her mistress. Upon which, being hardly treated, she fled from Sarai—But being divinely warned to return, she obeyed, and brought Abraham a son named Ishmael, concerning whom we find a prediction which has been remarkably fulfilled. See Genesis xvi. 11—12. and xvii. 20.

In the ninety-ninth year of Abraham’s age, the Lord appeared again to him, renewed his covenant, repeated his promises, and appointed circumcision as the seal of the covenant; promised a son by Sarai, whose name was to be called Isaac; predicted the greatness of Ishmael; and changed the name of Sarai to Sarah, as well as that of her husband from Abram to Abraham.

According to the terms of the covenant, Abraham circumcised all in his household; and this before the birth of Isaac, from whom the tribes of Israel should descend. Not long after this, the Lord appeared again to Abraham—gave him additional assurances that he should have a son by Sarah; revealed his design of destroying Sodom and the cities of the plain; and graciously permitted a very affecting intercession to be made in behalf of the guilty place where Lot dwelt. xviii, 23—33.

The fact seems to be that there were not ten righteous persons in the place. In the nineteenth chapter we have an account of the most horrible wickedness of the people, and of the awful destruction which came upon them. Lot with a part of his family was delivered from this destruction. His wife, however, contrary to divine command, looked back, and was turned into “a pillar of salt.” This passage of scripture has been so misunderstood, that although not directly connected with the history of Abraham, it may be well to make a few remarks in the way of explanation. The whole country where Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain once stood, is now the lake Asphaltitis, and its margin. In this lake there are very generally found numerous pieces of bitumen (a very inflammable substance) mixed with sulphur. There are many traces of volcanic eruptions. And often large lumps of bitumen and sulphur arise from the bottom of the lake, emitting smoke and exploding with considerable noise.

The probability is, that by the power of the Almighty, a quantity of sulphur or nitre was precipitated from the air, and ignited by the electric fluid, which communicated fire to these cities, and to the bituminous earth; so that the whole bed of this lake was burned out—as it is said that in some of our swamps, large ponds, and even considerable lakes, are formed by the burning of inflammable matter, such as roots of trees, with their trunks, &c.—In relation to the wife of Lot, she might, as she lingered on the plain of Sodom, have been covered with sulphur, bitumen, or some salt, which having surrounded her, became indurated; and thus she might have remained an example to others of the danger of neglecting the divine warnings. It ought however to be observed that the expression may be interpreted figuratively. Thus in Num. xviii. 19, and 2 Chron. xiii. 15. we have the phrase *a covenant of salt*, which has been interpreted a perpetual covenant. The mode of speech might have arisen from the known preservative power of salt. Accordingly when it is said that Lot's wife was changed into a pillar of salt, it may mean that she was destroyed by the fire, or smoke, or bitumen, for a warning that should be perpetuated through all generations. This interpretation has been embraced by many eminent persons. It is unnecessary to our purpose to comment on the remainder of this chapter.

In the twentieth chapter we have an account of Abraham's calling his wife sister, to preserve his life from the apprehended designs of the king of Gerar; on which we have made such remarks as were necessary; and they need not be repeated. We shall only observe that Abimelech seems to have been a worshipper of the true God; and of course a good man—his intention was to do honor to Abraham, and form a close connection with him. As soon as he knew that Sarah was Abraham's wife he restored her, and was disposed to treat Abraham very kindly. In the sixteenth verse we have a passage of considerable obscurity, of which the following explanation has been given, [see the passage.] “And unto Sarah he said behold I have given thy *brother* (meaning to censure her equivocation) a thousand pieces of silver; behold it (i. e. the silver) is to thee a covering of the eyes (that is to procure a veil) unto all that are with thee, and with all *others*; thus was she reprov'd: or, using the word in the imperative mood, and do thou act correctly—speak the truth.” At the end of the year, according to the prediction, Sarah bare a son to Abraham, and called his name Isaac; this was the seed of promise, through whom the blessing was to be bestowed. The birth of this child was the cause of a separation in the

family of Abraham; Hagar with her son was sent away, and Isaac regarded as his father's heir. This appears to have been a sore trial to the old patriarch. It was however approved by Heaven, and Abraham was comforted with the assurance that Ishmael should be protected, and become a great nation.

About this time Abimelech, who saw that Abraham was blessed, and prospered in all things, made a covenant with him; and they lived in great harmony.

The incidents next mentioned in the history of the patriarch, are of a very affecting nature. We shall only allude to them now, intending to make them the subject of particular inquiry hereafter. When Isaac had become a young man, God directed his father to take him to a mountain in the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering. Abraham obeyed, &c. read the passage, ver. 6—19.

In the twenty-third chapter we have an account of the death and burial of Sarah, which requires no particular remarks. In the succeeding chapter the care taken by Abraham to procure a suitable wife for his son Isaac is recorded with much minuteness; for the purpose, no doubt, of affording a lesson to parents on this important subject. We have here a pleasing account of the simplicity of ancient manners and customs.—But as nothing difficult occurs, we shall not stay to comment on this passage; nor on the few events which are recorded in the subsequent chapter, where we have an account of the death of Abraham, in a good old age, full of honors as he was of years—We see him here falling like a shock of corn fully ripe; and descending in peace to the grave.

To this rapid sketch of the history of the Patriarch, it may not be amiss to add, that Abraham was a man famous in all the East, and that many traditions remain among the people of that country concerning him.

The Mahometans have given us a long history of this Patriarch; in which it is evident that they hold him in very great respect, and that they are acquainted with the principal events of his life as recorded by Moses. They pretend to have discovered his tomb, have built a mosque over it, and consider it the fourth place for sanctity in the world. Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, being the first three.

The Magi, that is the worshippers of fire, among the Persians, have equal respect for this Patriarch—They maintain that Zoroaster, their great master, was the same with Abraham, and tell many wonderful stories concerning him, which it is needless to repeat.

The history to which we have been attending, might furnish us with many lessons of practice. but most of the remarks which might here be made, will fall most naturally under the discussions on which it is our purpose hereafter to enter.—One or two observations will be submitted here.

1. We see imperfections and errors in the best human beings, and should therefore be on our guard; and slow to condemn others, seeing that we partake of the same fallen nature, and may be far behind those whom we condemn, in every good thing.

2. In relation to the conduct of Lot—He, for love of worldly interest, chose his habitation among very corrupt men, and suffered not a little in consequence—We ought to take heed, lest thus we be led astray.

3. In the history of Abraham, we have a remarkable illustration of the faithfulness of God in his promises, and the benefit of faith and firm reliance on what God has spoken.

4. True piety, and general consistency of conduct, will command respect, and obtain the blessing of him who maketh rich and addeth no sorrow therewith.

Let us all then be truly pious.

REVIEW.

CONVERSATIONS ON THE BIBLE.—*By a Lady.*

Published in Philadelphia, by Harrison Hall.

Twenty years ago, the expectation was entertained, and expressed, that in a short time the Bible would become obsolete. Nothing, as we believe, had been prepared as a substitute: for the men who were devoted to this unholy purpose, thought only of the work of destruction. But how has the design succeeded? Verily, this hope has been swept away, as with the besom of destruction. With a little variation we may here apply a prediction contained in the second Psalm. "The philosophists set *themselves*, and the *unbelievers* take counsel against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." The Bible at this day attracts more attention than all other books in the world. Hundreds of thousands of copies are published, and either sold or gratuitously distributed every year. It is found in the palaces of the great; in the studies of the learned; in the chambers of

middle classes; and in the huts of the poor. It is making its way to the kraal and the wigwam; to the tent and the cavern. Epitomes and abstracts of this wonderful book, are put into the hands of children; and as soon as they can read, they learn of man's apostacy; of Abel's martyrdom; of Enoch's piety; of Abraham's faith; of Joseph's purity: They read of the self denial of Moses, who chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; and they see that it was wise in him "to have respect unto the recompense of reward." They hear of the devotion of Samuel, of David, of Isaiah, of Daniel, and other holy men: They are taught the wonderful history of the birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ; and learn the lessons of heavenly wisdom taught by him and his apostles. We rejoice in this change. We hail it as an omen of good; and look forward with full persuasion, that the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God.

Every attempt to make the contents of the scriptures better known, and impress them more deeply on the minds of the young, deserves encouragement. The little work now before us has this object in view; and, in a manner very creditable, both to the understanding and the piety of the author, is adapted to its end. This volume contains conversations on the five books of Moses; with the promise of a continuation, should the design and execution be approved.

The writer justly, but mildly, reprehends the indifference of many professed believers to the study of the Old Testament: and remarks—"They reverence the New Testament as the gospel of glad tidings, without knowing that if one is the casket, the other is the key which displays the treasure in the clearest point of view." She tells us that, "A connected view of the principal narrative of the scriptures, with brief illustrations from authors of acknowledged credit, is all that is attempted." The work is in the form of dialogues between a mother and her children. This we think judicious. The questions proposed by the young people, are calculated to excite attention to the answers given by the parent. We will give some extracts to enable our readers to judge for themselves whether the book would not be a very suitable present for parents to make to their children.

"Catharine. What is meant by a sacrifice?"

Mother. Sacrifice, generally means, an offering made to the Deity as an acknowledgment of his power, and a payment of that homage which is due to him. Eucharistical sacrifices, or thanksgivings, were offered in Paradise; those which are called expiatory, were not instituted till Adam had trans-

gressed the law of his Creator, and had learned, that without an *atonement* he could not be pardoned. We have no direct account of the origin of this mode of worship, but we hesitate not, to pronounce it of divine authority, because Adam was taught immediately by his Creator; and without a command, it is highly probable he would not have thought of destroying the animals committed to his care, nor would he have imagined, that an offering, apparently so cruel, could be acceptable to a Being, whose benevolence was impressed on all around him." P. 11.

"*Fanny.* Do you think, mother, that a rainbow had never been seen before that time? Surely it had rained before the deluge?

Mother. The words of scripture, "Behold I set my bow in the clouds and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth," have led some to suppose that the bow was but now created and for this very purpose. But the text does not necessarily imply this. The rainbow had, perhaps, always appeared, under the same circumstances in which we see it at this day; but it was selected on this occasion as the sign or memorial of a promise. Others have said, that, "though it had rained before the deluge, yet the superintending Providence which caused the rainbow to appear as a pledge of the assurance that he gave, (that the world should never more be destroyed by water;) might have prevented the concurrence of such circumstances in the time of rain as were essentially necessary for the formation of a bow. It might have rained when the sun was set, or when he was more than 54 degrees high, when no bow could be seen, and the rain might continue between the spectator and the sun until the clouds were expended, or in any other direction, but that of an opposition to the sun."*

So many circumstances are necessary to coincide, for the formation of a rainbow, that even now it appears in but few of the rains which our beneficent preserver showers down to fertilize the land and render the air salubrious." P. 16, &c.

"Consoled now by the caresses of his new friends, Jacob found himself at home in his uncle's family—he took an interest in their affairs, and a share in their labors. Weeks rolled pleasantly away, but he said nothing of the purport of his visit, until Laban observing his capacity for business, proposed to give him a salary for his services, because, "it was unreasonable that they should be received without a com-

* See *Lectures on Natural Philosophy*; by the Rev. John Ewing, provost of the University of Pennsylvania.

pensation." He bid him therefore, to fix his own terms, and Jacob required no time to deliberate—the charms of Rachel had captivated his affections, the voice of avarice was silent, and love alone preferred her claim: for Rachel—the beautiful shepherdess, was all he desired! Seven years would he serve were she the reward? Unwilling to part with his nephew, or to alienate his family from that of Isaac, Laban gladly accepted the offer. Time now moved on silken wings—years were but days in the estimation of Jacob; he kept the herds of his kinsman, and felt neither the noon-day sun, nor the midnight dew! For in the society of Rachel, every toil was delightful. Seven years were completed, and he claimed his reward. Laban prepared for the wedding—the neighbors were invited, and the banquet was spread—but a cruel disappointment awaited the lover; for the deceitful Laban, favored by the peculiar fashion of their marriage rites, united him to Leah instead of Rachel!

Charles. Then the imposition that Jacob had practised on his father, was returned on his own head.

Mother. Yes. But we do not choose that others should do unto us as we do unto them; and Jacob accordingly, grieved and indignant, complained of the cheat. He had served for Rachel; why then was Leah, the disagreeable Leah imposed on him? They who commit injustice are seldom without an excuse, and the crafty Syrian had one at hand. It was not their custom, he said, to give away the younger daughter, before the elder; but seeing that poor Jacob had given his heart wholly to Rachel, another seven years servitude might obtain her also. No price was too great to obtain the object of his affection—and another period of bondage rewarded at last his constancy.

Fanny. Was it lawful for Jacob to marry two sisters?

Mother. It was never lawful for any man to have more than one wife at one time. The will of the Creator is unequivocally declared in the formation of one man and one woman at the first. Reason easily induces the same—and the testimony of the Messiah is to us conclusive. But the patriarchs, though worshippers of the true God, were not so clear in the knowledge of their duty as we are: besides, they were unhappily surrounded by Heathens, into whose vitious practices they were sometimes betrayed. Their deviations are faithfully recorded to show us, that the best of men were imperfect, and to afford us a powerful argument for the veracity of scripture history. Jacob was certainly a pious man, yet he committed several actions that cannot be justified. He not only married both sisters, but he took while they yet lived, two other wives." P. 55, &c.

These extracts will suffice for our purpose. The book is printed in a neat style, on good paper; and will be the better liked by children, because there are in it several engravings, which they will think pretty.

REVIEW.

Memoirs of the Society of Virginia for the improvement of Agriculture, containing communications on various subjects in Husbandry and rural affairs.

Printed by Shepherd & Pollard, Richmond—1818.

The weakness of Human Nature is illustrated by the limited efficacy of individual exertions. It is comparatively very little that man can do, when left alone. A sense of imbecility, as well as the social principle, induces him to unite with others of his species, and bind himself to them by conventional obligations. The reason of this remark extends not only to the general organization of society, but to various associations formed for the promotion of specific purposes of utility. No one man possesses all the facilities for making great improvements. Without the genius of Brindley, the Duke of Bridgewater's wealth and public spirit would never have accomplished the mighty works which now adorn and enrich England. And Arkwright's wonderful mechanical ingenuity would have been unproductive, unless he had been associated with a rich banker, who furnished the means of realizing his conceptions. A combination of individuals intent on the same purposes, gives an impulse to the mind, and communicates an energy to exertion, rarely witnessed in other circumstances. Hence the value of associations for the promotion of arts and science. Medical, philosophical, and other societies have had no little efficacy, in promoting and aiding individuals in researches connected with the health, comfort, and pleasure of man. It is with sincere gratification, then, that we have contemplated the commencement and progress of the Agricultural Society of Virginia. To dwell on the importance of Agriculture, would be as much a work of supererogation, as to attempt to prove that light is pleasant, and that pure air and water are refreshing. It is more to the purpose to observe that agriculture is a science as well as an art. Improvements in this branch of human industry, are to be made in the same way in which they are made in natural philoso-

phy; that is, by diligent observation, by numerous and careful experiments. The man whose knowledge is merely traditional, can only be expected to walk in the old beaten track, in which his father went before him. We therefore regard, as an auspicious event, the association of a number of the most intelligent and respectable men in the state, for the express purpose of improving its agriculture.

An earnest desire of improvement in any thing not in itself vicious, is calculated to produce a good moral effect. When men are intent only on selfish views and present gratifications, it is impossible that they should not descend in the scale of excellence. To this it may be added, that every effort which a man earnestly makes for the improvement of the soil, or of the intellectual and moral condition of his countrymen, attaches him more strongly to his country. The good that we do, or that we honestly attempt to do, kindles to a brighter flame, the sacred fire of patriotism in our bosoms. Fully persuaded as we are of this truth, we are most anxious to make our Journal instrumental in promoting every species of improvement. And we again freely and cordially offer our pages for this purpose.

The publication which stands at the head of this article, is the first of the Agricultural Society of Virginia; and we proceed to give some account of its contents.

In a short preface, notice is taken of the neglect of Agriculture in Virginia; of the cause of that neglect; and of the recent beneficial changes which have been made by a few, in our system. The advantages derived from an improved mode of cultivation, however, ought to be detailed and explained to all. With this view several societies have been formed in the state; and among them "The Agricultural Society of Virginia." The object of this institution is, "to aid in improving the agriculture of our country, by encouraging and stimulating the exertions of individuals, by collecting facts as extensively as possible, and communicating those facts to the public."

"Our endeavors have not been entirely unsuccessful. Several gentlemen have kindly favored us with their experiments, and their sentiments; and we have supposed that, in addition to giving their essays publicity in Gazettes, it will be advantageous to communicate them in a more durable form. We have therefore determined to publish such communications as it is supposed may be useful, in pamphlets sufficiently large to make a quarter or half volume, which may be bound together by those who wish to preserve them in volumes of a convenient size." P. iv.

The laws of the association are printed next, after which follow the names of the officers, and a list of more than two hundred members. With a number of these gentlemen we have the pleasure to be acquainted; and know that they are intelligent, active, and zealous. We give the names of the officers.

John Taylor, *President.*

Wilson Cary Nicholas, *Vice-President.*

John Adams, *Secretary.*

Samuel G. Adams,

John Patterson,

James M. Garnett,

Thomas Marshall, *and*

Littleton W. Tazewell,

John Preston, *Treasurer.*

John Marshall,

Wilson Cary Nicholas,

John Wickham,

John Coalter, *and*

John Adams,

*Assistant
Secretaries.*

*Corresponding
Committee.*

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Before we proceed to state the contents of this publication we shall offer a remark or two of a general nature—Agriculture as a science is scarcely known among us. The object of agricultural memoirs, then, ought to be, in the first place to give an impulse to the minds of intelligent planters and farmers, and excite them to make enquiries, to try experiments, and make a faithful record of the results; and in the second place, to afford clear and explicit instructions to all engaged in the cultivation of the soil, so that real improvements may be adopted without difficulty. In relation to the first object we shall only remark here, that in recording experiments, every particular that can in any way affect the result ought to be carefully noticed. For instance, in recording an experiment with marl as a manure on wheat; it is not sufficient for the farmer to say that on so many acres he spread such a quantity of marl, and reaped so many bushels of wheat. He ought to inform us of the nature of the soil, whether of sand, clay, or loam; to let us know whether it was naked, or covered with a coat of vegetable matter; whether upland or lowland; whether the season was wet or dry, propitious or the reverse. General notices in experimental philosophy are worth nothing. The more particular the detail the better; provided nothing irrelevant should be introduced. Here again there is need both of skill and caution. It is as great a mistake to assign a wrong cause, as to omit a right one. But we have no room

to extend our remarks on this subject. Nor should we have thought it necessary to say a word, were it not the fact that few have acquired the skill and caution furnished by *experience* in making *experiments*.

In agricultural memoirs, as far as the instruction of plain people is the object, great plainness and simplicity of style is necessary. The splendid figures and ambitious ornaments of a rhetorician, are here worse than useless. Long, involved sentences, as hard as Greek, are utterly misplaced. The meaning ought to "poke in the reader's face." Otherwise men, who read little, and are unaccustomed to study, will throw the book by in disgust. It might be well too, either to avoid the use of terms of art and science; or, and this perhaps would be better, always to explain them. Thus the ordinary reader would read intelligibly; and be pleased to find himself growing in knowledge.

The want of room obliges us to drop this subject here—We shall resume it in our next number.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR.

Mr. Editor,

You will pardon me, I hope, for saying that amidst the variety of your avocations, you sometimes forget your promises. Did you not give us reason in your last volume to expect that the important subject of female education would, sometimes at least, occupy your attention? Yet you have favored your readers with almost nothing on this interesting topic. Suffer me to recall it to your remembrance, and urge you to regard it according to its importance.

That opinions on this subject are very discordant, will appear from the following detail—Not very long ago, I was in company with a number of persons; who spent the evening in conversation. A very unfashionable, and some may think, a very dull and heavy way of spending time! Be this as it may, we were pleased with it. Our chat was, in general, very desultory. The attention of the company, however, was closely engaged for a time, on the question, *when ought a young lady be regarded as fit for marriage?* Now, although marriage is almost as old as creation, I find that people of every age and condition take a lively interest in it to this day. And when this question was started, every one was ready to give an opinion.

One, a rough, free speaking man, who was generally believed to be wealthy, and to mind the main chance as well as

another, declared very bluntly that he wanted nothing in a wife but an agreeable person; habits of industry and frugality; a good fortune; and skill to *cut out a shirt and make a pudding*. As for accomplishments, he despised them. He wanted no gabbling of French about him. It was out of the question for a wife to tell a husband that he had made a false concord. A woman, after marriage, commonly used her piano for a sideboard; and a cabinet maker could furnish one at a *cheaper* rate, and better suited to the purpose. And as to painting and drawing—he had often had his ingenuity tasked to the uttermost to be civil and yet not tell a lie, when fond mothers had shown the wretched copies of *heads and landscapes*, made by their daughters, and stuck up in frames to be exhibited to every visitor—This *tirade* drew from me the remark, made however in a whisper to an interesting girl near me, that the gentleman talked like a *rich old bachelor*. “They say that he is nine and thirty,” replied she with great vivacity.

The first speaker having exhausted his common places, was silent; and another, of entirely different character took up the subject. His eye was languishing and his voice feminine. His talk was of sylph-like forms, and swimming motions, and angelic sweetness, and electric rapidity of thought and feeling, and fifty things of this sort, borrowed from fifty different novels, all in character of a confirmed sentimentalist. In truth he was in love with an imaginary being, the creature of his fancy, to whom he had given a “name” indeed, but no local habitation; for that was impossible.

Another thought that the schooling of a year or two might be very well; and that attention to domestic economy was certainly necessary; but that a young lady ought by all means to go into company, and see how the world lives, before she tied herself to a husband and home for life. The speaker declared that good company was the best school in the world; and that a winter in town, under the care of a judicious friend, would be an admirable *finish* of the preparatory course.

As the conversation advanced, the interest of the speakers increased. The speaking at first, to borrow musical terms, was *in solo*; but soon became a *duett*, a *trio*, a *quartetto*, and at length, as no doubt you have often observed, if you have often been in company, all spoke, and none listened.

Now, Mr. Editor, let us have your sentiments on this subject. You can, at any rate, give us your opinion; and I will ensure that they who like it, will adopt it.

I am respectfully, &c.

P.

In reply to our correspondent, we would say first in our own justification, that the important subject to which our attention is called, has not been forgotten. We hoped that some of our assistants would have taken it up before this time, and treated it to some extent—But in this hope we have been disappointed. It is our determination, however, to pay particular attention to the general subject of education; and such is our opinion of the influence of ladies in civilized society; so powerfully do they affect the general interests of the country, that we cannot neglect the subject of their education. But in this place we have room for only a few remarks.

We have to say, then, that we coincide with none of the opinions expressed in the letter of our friend. If indeed the only business of a wife is to aid in filling the purse, and catering to the appetites of her husband, then the sum of necessary knowledge may be expressed by the common saying, it is enough for a woman to know how to make a *shirt and a pudding*. But if there are other matters of *some importance*, demanding her attention, then those lordly gentlemen, who only wish to bargain for *chief domestics* ought to be informed that they can trade *cheaper* among savages, than in a civilized community. Not that we undervalue industry and domestic economy. On the contrary, we appreciate them most highly. Ignorance, however, is no friend to either. It invests industry with the attributes of slavery; and disqualifies for that forethought and management which is always implied in true economy. As the man, who demands a slave for a wife, should turn Turk; so he who would woo and wed a *sylph*, must apply some potent enchantment, by which he shall be transformed into a *Gnome*. He has nothing to do with the daughters of Eve.

The value of company, as a school for girls is, we fear, generally and greatly overrated. Certainly, we would not cloister them as nuns. The society of the intelligent, the learned, and the good, is both pleasant and profitable. There is an atmosphere of intellectual and moral influences about them, which communicates vigor to the mind and health to the heart. But it is not associating with them, and receiving the impress of their character, that constitutes *company* in the ordinary acceptation of the term. The finishing process, to which our correspondent alludes, is often conducted in this way. A girl is sent abroad, we will suppose to town, to see company. She is committed to the direction, and placed under the control of an approved and trusty friend.—At first she is bashful and timid. On every occasion advice is solicited, and duly regarded. Her self-diffidence, sweet

and cheerful compliance, and native simplicity are admired; and thought highly interesting. In process of time acquaintances are formed; visits paid and returned. Of these acquaintances some, in all probability, have just *turned out*; with their heads teeming with all the imaginations of unexperienced youth, and hearts burning with the love of pleasure. The lady selected for a protector, can for a few times go out with her protegee. Engagements, however, soon become too numerous to allow of that. She must, then, either discountenance these frequent visits, or permit her young disciple to go without her. She does not feel herself at liberty to exercise authority. The young lady, then, who has been sent from home to see, and improve by good company, is perpetually in the whirl of gay society; the passion for amusement and pleasure grows on her. Habits of extravagance are contracted. Dress, dancing, balls, plays, and all the inventions of thoughtless mortals to get rid of time, take complete possession of the heart. And thus the work of education is finished! Thus a young woman is prepared for the most important relations and duties of life!

It deserves here to be remarked that the society of coevals has the greatest influence on us. It is the young that mutually operate on each other, and give the cast and coloring to their several characters. This being the case, the expedient of sending girls *into company* is hazardous. Besides there are so many, who have not grown wise by age, who have reaped no benefits from experience, that a parent ought to be cautious, and look well to probable consequences, before sending out a daughter to mingle with the world, and receive its impressions.

There is another idea. Money paid for education is often paid reluctantly. And the course, which we have censured, is preferred because it is *cheapest*. This is, in many cases, very doubtful. But suppose that it were not so; a prudent man had much rather have habits of self-denial, moderate wishes, and principles of economy and industry, for a wife's portion; than money, or land and negroes, with unrestrained desires and habits of self-indulgence.

We hope that these hasty remarks will satisfy our correspondent for the present; especially when we assure him that we intend diligently to pursue the subject of female education; and discuss it as we are able, in reference to the very question mentioned in the letter. In a word we intend to exert our best abilities to persuade our young countrymen not to think of selecting as companions for life any but such as have a real and strong desire for intellectual and moral

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improvement—And we heartily advise our fair maidens to reject the addresses of every young man, who does not know how comfortably to pass a rainy day alone, with no means of amusement but a good book.

THE DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM'S CURIOUS METHOD OF REFUTING A POPISH PRIEST.

King James the II, hearing that the duke of Buckingham was somewhat out of order, thought that a proper season for working upon his credulity, and making a convert of him to popery; and accordingly sent Fitzgerald, an Irish priest, to him, to use his utmost endeavors for that purpose. The duke, who had been apprized of the intended visit, as also of the motive to it, and was consequently prepared for the reception of the priest, was no sooner informed of his arrival, than he gave orders for his introduction with great ceremony, which the father thought an happy omen; and the usual compliments having been passed, he desired him to sit down. An inquiry into the duke's health followed then of course; and he owning himself indisposed, the father, after expressing himself greatly concerned about his future welfare, declared the design of his coming, and by whose order he came. His grace pretended great willingness to be better instructed, if he was in any error; but desired that they might drink a glass of wine together, previous to their entering into a conference; to which the priest agreeing, a bottle was called for, and brought. But, guess the poor father's surprise, when, after having drank a glass or two, the duke (a man of incomparable sense, and a celebrated wit,) taking the cork out of the bottle, and stroking it several times with great gravity, asked him very seriously, how he liked that horse. He was confounded to the last degree at such a question; and yet more so, when his grace, finding him continue silent, repeated it again without changing his countenance in the least; but persisting, on the contrary, in stroking the cork, in calling it a horse, and launching into the most extravagant encomiums on its goodness and beauty; he at last, however, answered, he found his grace had a mind to be merry, and that he had chosen an unseasonable time, and he would therefore come again, when his grace was better disposed to hear what he had to offer. "Merry!" cries the duke, in a seeming surprise; "I'll assure your reverence I was never more serious in all my days. Why, is not your reverence of the same opinion? Do not you think it as fine a

steed as ever you saw in your life? What fault can you find with it?"—"I beg your grace would compose yourself a little and consider," says the father. "Consider what?" answers the duke: "What objection have you against him? you certainly have not sufficiently observed him."—"Ah! my lord," replies the father, "do not you see that it is but a cork? and do you not know, that you took it but a few minutes ago out of that bottle?"—"A very pretty story, indeed," says the duke. "What! would you persuade me that this fine courser, whom I have been so long commending and stroking, is but a mere cork, and that I am under a delusion?"—"Nothing more certain, my lord," answers the father. "I would not be too positive of any thing," replies the duke calmly: "perhaps my illness may have discomposed me more than I am aware of: but I wish you would convince me that I am mistaken. I say this is a horse; you affirm it is a cork; how do prove it to be so?"—"Very easily, my lord: if I look at it, I see it is a cork; if I take it my hand, I feel it is a cork; if I smell to it, I find it is but cork; and if I bite it with my teeth, I am assured that it is the same: so that I am every way convinced thereof, by the evidence of all my senses."—"I believe your reverence may be in the right," says the duke (as just recovering from a dream;) "but I am subject to whims: let us, therefore, talk no more of it, but proceed to the business that brought you hither."

This was just what the father wanted, and accordingly he entered upon the most controverted points between the Papists and us; when the duke, cutting him short, told him, what was most difficult of digestion with him was their doctrine of transubstantiation; and if he could but prove that single article, all the rest would soon be got over. Hereupon the priest, not doubting but he should soon make the duke a proselyte, enters upon the common topics used by all those of his persuasion on such occasions, insisting, above all, greatly upon the words of consecration, "This is my body," and "This is my blood," &c. To all which the duke replied, that these were but figurative expressions, and no more to be understood literally than those others, "I am the vine," and "I am the door;" besides which, continued he, the bread and wine still remain unchanged as before, after the words of consecration. "No, my lord," cries the father, with humble submission, "there is only the appearance or form of those elements; for they are actually changed into the very real body and blood."

"Nay," says the duke, "I will convince you to the contrary, father, by your own argument: I look upon it, and see

it is bread; I touch it, and feel it is bread; and I taste it, and I feel it is but bread, mere bread still: remember the cork, father, remember the cork." This answer silenced the father.

Christian Guardian.

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

FOREIGN:

Progress of Christianity in the South Seas.

A very pleasing narrative has just appeared of the London Society's Mission at Otaheite, and other islands in the South Seas. The following extract will show the extent of that rapid diffusion of the Gospel in those parts to which we adverted in our number, for February, 1818, p. 128.

"In order to form," remark the Directors of the Society, "a just estimate of the moral triumphs of Christianity in the South Seas, it is necessary to consider distinctly what has actually been accomplished among those distant islanders, as well as the future prospects which have been unfolded before them.

"Idolatry has been renounced by the inhabitants of no less than eight islands. But justly to appreciate the importance of this statement, it is necessary to consider, for a moment, what idolatry is; that it is a systematic alienation of the heart from God, by means of which the immortal mind, already a captive to sin, is bound still faster in this dreadful captivity, by the spirit of a sensualizing and infatuating superstition. To break the fetters forged by this spirit, and to liberate the mind from a thralldom so awful, are alone achievements of high and inestimable importance. This, however, has been accomplished in the islands of the South Sea. But the subversion of idolatry there involves the abolition of various other dreadful evils;—1. of infanticide, which is already near-

ly exploded;—2, of the Arreoy society, a privileged order, who practised the vilest cruelty and abominations; with the total dissolution of which society it may be expected that infant murder will entirely cease;—3, of human sacrifices;*—4, of the murder of prisoners taken in battle;—5, of the principal causes of war itself;—6, of various other immoral and pernicious practices connected with their idolatry.

"With idolatry, the people have renounced their former system of thinking and acting—an evident reformation of manners has taken place, their vain and indecent amusements are almost entirely laid aside, and a degree of domestic and social intercourse is enjoyed to which formerly they were entirely strangers.†

"The christian religion, as a system, is now the religion of Otaheite, Eimeo, and six other islands. The natives have erected places of worship in every district of each island.

* "The horrid practice of killing men, to offer them in sacrifice, we trust, will never again occur on the shores of Otaheite."—Letter of Mr. Hayward.

† "The men, women, and children, now all eat together; and although this may not appear to be of much consequence, yet their former customs led on to many and great evils."—Letter of Mr. Hayward.

They strictly observe the Sabbath,* and constantly assemble together for christian worship and instruction; and they act thus (a point of great importance) spontaneously, it being evident that the Missionaries can attend to preach, or to direct the worship, at comparatively but few places. Every where they are believed to observe private prayer, and in Eimeo almost every house has family worship.

"A desire for knowledge is universally planted among the natives. They are every where importunate

* "When Mr. Crook, with his family, arrived in the Active on the coast of Otaheite, they were much surprised, that not a single native could be seen all along the shore, as the vessel sailed; nor could they perceive any smoke arising from their dwellings. This excited in the mind of Mr. C. and others a painful suspicion, that the island had been subdued, and all the inhabitants cut off in the war. In the midst of this agitation of mind, one of the sailors, an Otaheitean, who left Port Jackson in the Active, observed, that the natives were keeping the Sabbath day—that of late, they did no kind of work, nor went out of their houses, except to worship God—and that the whole of the day was employed in religious worship, or in teaching one another to read. At length the vessel came to anchor in Matavai Bay; but not a native made his appearance until Monday morning; when great numbers repaired to the brig, bringing with them their usual testimonies of hospitality, of food and fruit of all kinds, with other presents of cloth, &c. They were highly pleased and thankful to God, that he had sent another teacher among them, and fully satisfied all on board that they had been observing the Sabbath."—Letter of Mr. R. Hassall, of Parramatta.

"We are happy to notice, that the Sabbath is observed in a manner very different from what it used to be, and the natives now dress their food on the Saturday evenings, as the Missionaries have ever done."—Letter of Mr. Hayward.

for books, and for missionaries to come and instruct them; and, where they cannot obtain the latter advantage, and have proper books, they teach each other. What such a state of things may ultimately lead to, under the faithful labors of nearly twenty christian missionaries, and the blessing of God upon their labors, it is not for us to say; but surely the most encouraging and pleasing expectations may reasonably be entertained.

"At least three thousand of the natives are supplied with books, and are able to make use of them, and many hundreds of them can read well.

"The way is opened, in the islands, to civilization, to the introduction of the useful arts, to the cultivation of the earth, &c. &c. Where the precepts of christianity are diffused, idleness never fails to become disreputable.

"It may be expected, that the institution of marriage among the natives will gradually lay the foundation of domestic and social happiness, and that the general influence of christianity will rear and cement the superstructure.

"It is at least probable, that the example of these islanders will have a beneficial influence upon the natives of other islands of the Pacific Ocean, as the intelligence successively reaches them; and thus prepare the way for other missions, and of new triumphs for christianity."

The Directors add: "Since the preceding pages were written, further accounts have been received by the Directors from the South Seas, that fully confirm the statements which have been already presented to the reader. This intelligence comes down as late as the 22d of September, 1817; at which time peace continued in all the islands, Pomare to maintain his authority, the mission to prosper, and christianity to spread. The king, since the re-establishment of his government, had resided chiefly at Otaheite; but he frequently visited the missionaries at Eimeo, and seemed to display an increasing desire to promote the success of their undertaking.

44 FOREIGN RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

"The number of the natives in the Georgian Islands only, who were able to read and spell, was increased to between four and five thousand; and Pomare had issued orders, that in every district of the islands a school house should be erected, separate from the places of worship, and that the best instructed of his people should teach others. Several schools had already been erected in Otaheite, where the elementary books and the Catechism are taught; and since the establishment of the printing press, the natives of that island pass over in crowds to Afareaitu, to obtain books from the missionaries there. At this station a school had been erected, which was well attended; and of the natives who had been taught in the school at Papetoai, there were few who could not both read and spell well.

"The attendance on the public worship at each of the missionary stations, continued on an average to be from four to five hundred.* On the Sabbath the missionaries hold their own prayer-meeting at sunrise, the natives at the same time being assembled at theirs. At nine o'clock there is a service in the Taheitean language, when one of the missionaries addresses the natives; at eleven the brethren meet for worship in English; in the afternoon the native children are catechised; in the evening there is another native service, when a discourse is delivered by one of the missionaries, of whom five are capable of intelligibly addressing the people in the Taheitean tongue.

"On the Monday evenings a 'questioning,' or conversation 'meeting' is held, when the natives propose various queries to the missionaries, which the latter endeavor to resolve

* "The place of worship at Afareaitu will contain six hundred; yet many are frequently obliged to hear as they are able, on the outside. These congregations usually contain many strangers, who are continually coming and going; and thus the knowledge they acquire at the missionary stations, is conveyed to many places which are comparatively deficient as to the means of religious instruction."

to their satisfaction. These queries are almost entirely connected with religious subjects. Some of them are comparatively insignificant, but others display a considerable degree of thought and intelligence, and an acquaintance with the nature of religion, which it would be almost a reflection on the islanders even to compare with that of thousands who bear the christian name in our own country."

"The whole number of places of worship erected in the islands of Otaheite and Eimeo, at the commencement of the year 1817, was eighty-four. Others had been subsequently built, which are not included in the subjoined list, and a very large one in the district of Pare (Otaheite) was building by order of the king. In the small island of Tetaroa three places of worship had also been erected.

„But while the natives are regular in their attendance on the public services of religion, they do not neglect the duties of family worship and retired devotion. Private or secret prayer is described to be the constant practice of almost every individual. They are glad also to avail themselves of incidental opportunities of improving themselves in the knowledge of christianity. They visit the missionaries at their own houses, in order to propose questions, chiefly on religion, and sometimes continue their inquiries even until midnight. Several also attend the missionaries for the purposes of learning to sing hymns, or that they may be taught to pray. The instances of intelligent and genuine piety among them are represented to be numerous, and their manners to correspond with their christian profession."

COLLEGE AT CAPE HENRY (ST. DOMINGO.)

The Rev. Mr. Morton, an English Clergyman, left England last January, to act as classical professor in the college instituted by king Henry. He has commenced with twenty pupils, the sons of some of the principal persons, and who are destined to fill hereafter important offices in the state. He has the best

hope, under the blessing of God, of success with his pupils. At present, under the circumstances of their previous education and the lateness of the period at which many of them began, it is found expedient, with respect to this first class of young men, to carry them at once forward to the acquisition of such knowledge as may soonest fit them for actual service. The outline of the course pursued with them, comprises the principles of general grammar, with particular application to the English and the French; an extensive survey of geography, history, and political science; a complete circle of mathematical studies; composition; and elocution. Moral science and law will form a future part of the course. The king very justly considers this course best adapted to the present wants of the state.

Mr. Morton reads the Liturgy, and preaches every Sunday, in the National School Room. The service is in English, and is attended by the English and Americans, with a few Germans. Many circumstances would favour the labors of some able and zealous Missionaries from the Established Church.

WELSH INDIANS.

At a meeting of North Wales Missionary Society at Llonfyllin in Wales in August last, in the course of friendly conversation among the ministers present, their attention was called to what had lately been published respecting the *MONOGION*, the descendants of Madog ab Owain Gwynodd, and his followers, a colony of Welsh Indians, on the banks of the Missouri in North America. Observing that some, not only question, but strongly deny the existence of such a colony; that others produced proofs which to say the least, render its existence highly probable; and that this is a subject which no Welshman can consider as of minor importance, and particularly as such a colony, if found out, would have the first claim on the labours of Welsh Missionaries, "It was unanimously resolved, 1st. That it is the duty of this Society to endeavor to obtain every possible information on the subject. 2nd. That

for this purpose, the Secretary be requested to correspond with those patriotic ancient Britons, in the Metropolis who are laudably exerting themselves with a view of being fully satisfied on this important subject. 3d. That as we cannot attend to every idle rumor, so, on the other hand, we will consider ourselves highly obliged by any well authenticated intelligence which may from any quarter, be communicated to the Secretary. [Mr. Thom.

Death of an aged Mahometan Convert.

Spadilie, an aged convert from Mahomedanism, died last week. I baptized him about three years ago; and he grew in knowledge and grace. He died triumphantly at the age of 78. God wonderfully brought this man at the age of 72, to renounce the errors of the false prophet, and to bear testimony to the holiness of the Christian faith for nearly five years. His body was interred in the public burial ground, attended by many respectable and pious men, a circumstance unknown before. He was born in Ceylon, and had been a slave till within nineteen years of his death. [Religious Rem.

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

DOMESTIC:

The American Bible Society publishes quarterly extracts of its proceedings, for the purpose of affording information to the members and the public, of the progress of that glorious institution. From the last quarterly publication received by us, we derive the following very gratifying information.

A set of plates, duodecimo size, were forwarded to Kentucky early in last September, and it was expected that plates for an Octavo Bible would soon receive the same destination.

Plates for the New Testament part of a French Bible were daily expected from England.

The Plates for the Spanish New Testament, casting for the Society in New-York, were nearly finished. This is to be a true copy of an edition of the New Testament printed

at Madrid in 1797, being a very literal translation of the *Vulgate*, executed by *Rmo. P FELIPE SCIO DE S. MIGUEL, ob. spo electo de Segovia.*

The Board of Directors has resolved to appoint Agents in the principal places in the United States to receive and transmit such monies as may be paid to them on behalf of the Society.

Twelve thousand four hundred and seventy Bibles, and two thousand five hundred Testaments have been printed for the Society during this quarter. Of the Bibles two thousand copies are in Octavo

The amount of monies received during the months of August, September and October, is \$9,955 85. Of this sum upwards of \$1700 were contributions for making ministers of the gospel members of the Society for life: and of this amount \$1350 were contributed by *Ladies.*

The whole number of auxiliary Societies now known and recognized, amounts to *one hundred and seventy nine.*

The Board has decided that, according to the principles of the Constitution, no Society shall be considered as having become an auxiliary, until it shall have been officially communicated to the board, that its *sole object* is to promote the circulation of the Scriptures without note or comment; and that it will place its surplus revenue, after supplying its own district with the Scriptures, at the disposal of the American Bible Soci-

ety, as long as it shall remain connected with it.

FAYETTEVILLE, Oct. 8, 1818.

The Synod of North-Carolina, at their late meeting in this place, having deliberated upon the most probable means of extending the Kingdom of our Divine Lord, are pleased to have it in their power, in any measure, to co-operate with their brethren in other parts of the Christian world. Within our own bounds, we have various Bible and Missionary Societies regularly organized; and we believe, that the people under our care, are disposed to lend a helping hand in this great and laudable work. It is the opinion of this Synod, that the United Foreign Missionary Society promises great usefulness; and as that Society can only become extensively useful, by the application of considerable funds, Synod are desirous of increasing these funds by every proper means; and as many congregations in different parts of our country, have augmented the funds of said Society, by constituting their pastors members for life of that institution, Synod do hereby recommend to the several congregations under their care, as far as it may be convenient, to patronise the "*United Foreign Missionary Society,*" according to the laudable example which others have set before them, by constituting their ministers members for life, of an institution so important.

LITERATURE AND SCIENCE.

It is with the sincerest pleasure that we have it in our power to state that the Legislature of Virginia has in good earnest undertaken the patronage of education. A bill has lately passed both houses, establishing an University. We shall publish this law as soon as we can procure a copy. There was, it seems, very little diversity of opinion on any point, except the location of the institution. This was a matter in which we took very little interest. The *thing itself* was the object of our solicitude. And now we are only anxious respecting the manner in which it shall be conducted. Our most earnest wish; nay our fervent prayer is, that it may be an honor and a blessing to Virginia: that it may be a nursery of true science and genuine

virtue. May it please God to smile on the institution, and crown it with his favor.

There is one thing which we hope never will be forgotten; namely, that it is the **UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA**. It is no local or private establishment; no institution to subserve the purposes of a party—it is the **PROPERTY OF THE PEOPLE**, and every citizen in the state has a right and an interest in it. We hope that all will recognize this truth, and assert their right, and let their opinions be felt. This, as the university is under legislative patronage, can only be done through the representatives of the people. The people then, we trust, will demand full information on this subject, and will look to the management of their University. On the one hand they will see to it, that it shall not be partial to any society of christians; and on the other, that infidelity, whether open or disguised under a christian name, shall not taint its reputation and poison its influence.

Besides the establishment of an University, a large appropriation has been made for the support of primary schools. Forty-five thousand dollars were devoted to this object last year: and to this, twenty thousand dollars have been added the present session of the Legislature. As to the result of this measure, we have our doubts. In the first place we doubt the policy of inducing an exclusive dependance on the charity of the country for the means of education—We fear that this will be offering a premium for improvidence and laziness. In the next place we doubt whether intelligent citizens of sufficient activity will be found, to give the necessary excitement to the poor and ignorant. And we are persuaded that without great exertions the fund will be unproductive, that is, that no demand will be made upon it equivalent to its magnitude. The business of the state is, to make education, from its first elements to its highest attainments, *very cheap*: so that in our prosperous country suitable exertion may put it within the reach of all.

NOTE OF THE EDITOR TO SUBSCRIBERS.

In ushering into the world the first number of our present volume, the Editor would beg leave to say a word or two to his subscribers. As, when the title page of this volume shall make its appearance, we mean that it shall be accompanied with a preface, we shall now only say a few words.

That universal satisfaction should be given was not expected. In the beginning of our course, we anticipated directly contrary objections. Accordingly it has happened that, in the estimation of different subscribers, the Journal has been

too religious, and not enough so; has paid too much and too little attention to literature; has contained too much and too little intelligence, &c. &c. It has been said too, that there has been too little original matter in our pages. Now in answer to this, and it is the only objection which we shall answer, it is affirmed that in the 576 pages of the first volume, with the exception of religious intelligence, which certainly was not expected to be original, there are not fifty pages, which are not of domestic origin, written on purpose for this Magazine. And this is more, it is believed, than can be said respecting any other Journal of the kind, published either in this country or Europe.

But the editor is not to be understood as complaining on this subject. He has met with better success than was anticipated; and has received testimonies of the usefulness of his labors in the highest degree gratifying; and of its acceptance among men of taste and learning, which he does not choose to publish. He is not then discouraged. To do good is the object of his highest ambition; and the assurance that he is not living altogether in vain is the dearest solace of his life.

To those friends who have exerted themselves in promoting his work; and to the Assistants, whose contributions have given to the pages of the Magazine their principal value, he returns his most hearty thanks; and relying on their kind and continued aid, but chiefly on the favors of Heaven, with renovated hopes and increasing alacrity, he addresses himself to the renewed labours of the year.

In conclusion, he wishes for all, that as they advance, their path may grow brighter, until they arrive at the confines of perfect day; and that their happiness may increase until they are made partakers of the fulness of everlasting joy.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"Sketch of the History of the Church of Christ in Virginia," and "Academicus, No. II," have been received. We request the writer of the first piece mentioned, to finish it without delay.